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AUTHOR Brown, Frank E.
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ABSTRACT

Learning and Action through Social Education and Reading (LASER) is a program for urban community-school leadership and curriculum development. It seeks to break down the walls between schools and the communities they are intended to serve. It consists of seven interrelated components: Community-School Relations, Educational Leadership Development, In-School Activities, Joint Development and Evaluation, Parent Participation, Staff Development, and Student Curriculum Development. Ideally all LASER components will feed into one another. General objectives are: to facilitate the utilization and evaluation of the LASER School Curriculum component in public schools; to develop specific, structured procedures, based on the inquiry approach, to enable site participants to interact in a way that will lead to efficiency and self-sufficiency in utilizing the curriculum; and, to reformulate goals and objectives in the light of new results. Specific objectives for teachers are: to develop an understanding of the curriculum's philosophical foundation, objectives, and general teaching approach; to master the inquiry approach in (1) identifying (or defining) the problem, (2) hypothesizing, (3) testing the hypothesis, (4) drawing conclusions, (5) applying the conclusion, and (6) generalizing; to be aware of the purpose of each cognitive task; to create a classroom atmosphere that induces free exchange of ideas; to employ a variety of resources; to incorporate ideas, suggestions or materials of others to advance work; to engage students in the evaluative process, particularly of materials used; and others. (Author/JM)

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AN APPROACH TO THE LASER SCHOOL CURRICULUM

by

Frank E. Brown, Chairman

LASER SCHOOL CURRICULUM COLLABORATIVE

TASK FORCE

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Center for Urban Education
105 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10016

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The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done---men who are creative, inventive discoverers. The second goal of education is to form minds which can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything they are offered.

--Jean Piaget

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INTRODUCTION

This document is the product of the LASER School Curriculum Collaborative (LSCC) made up of teachers, supervisors, parents, and Center for Urban Education (CUE) staff engaged in implementing a new social education curriculum. The material presented here is an outgrowth of CUE's field activities in New York City public schools (1968-72). It is based on the use of two social education curricula developed by CUE, Planning for Change and Social Participation through Understanding and Reading (SPUR), and on their current revision, the School Curriculum, a component of Learning and Action through Social Education and Reading (LASER).

During the 1967-68 experimental phase of Planning for Change, the curriculum was scaled down from eighth to fourth and fifth grade levels in order to foster problem-solving skills in the child at an earlier age.

The approach outlined in the following pages is geared to the special needs of inner-city residents and inner-city school personnel; its emphasis on process, however, projects its use beyond that group to other sectors of our society.

I. THE PROBLEM: OLD vs. NEW SOCIAL STUDIES

Traditional modes of social studies have lost their usefulness for life in contemporary society generally, and for the target population, in particular. For one thing, the speed with which new information is being generated renders obsolete any course of studies that concentrates on the memorization of facts; today's discoveries may be refuted by tomorrow's. Another development that operates against traditional social studies lies in the mid-twentieth century social/political upheaval around human rights in which minority people at home and people of underdeveloped countries around the world are pushing forward in their bid to shape their own destinies.

The LASER School Curriculum premises thus grow out of the recognition of a need for materials that reflect the essence of these struggles and that will provide youngsters with cognitive maps, as it were, to help them get a handle on life, as they in turn attempt to struggle for a better life. The new curriculum aims to help students explore patterns of human interaction that can contribute to their own cognitive development.

The New Curriculum

LASER School Curriculum presents an inquiry approach to studying the urban elementary school child's world. Through exposure to stimulating materials, the child is encouraged to pose questions, to organize facts and to use them so as to hypothesize, generalize, and explain unfamiliar situations or problems.

To assist the child in this inquiry approach the curriculum provides concepts drawn from the social sciences. For example, it is hoped the child learns from a number of tasks the cultural anthropologist's definition of culture: "the entire way of life shared by a group of

people -- a body of organized thought patterns of behavior, systems of values and beliefs." Such a definition can serve the child as it serves the anthropologist --as a focus around which to organize questions, facts, and conclusions.

The child learns concepts of other social studies disciplines like economics, political science, history. These should prepare him not to only explore and study his immediate world but faraway unfamiliar worlds as well. Our field experience indicates that the child is already aware of a number of urban problems. We have, therefore, organized units around these problem areas as follows:

Migration	Jobs
Law and Justice	Health
Consumer Education	Drugs
Pollution	Housing
Communication	Transportation

There are enough resource materials in each unit to provide for approximately eight weeks of classroom activity. For example, the migration unit has several modules, or sub-units of activity. A suggested sequence would include 1) the introductory module ("Who are the People?") and 2) a series of ethnic modules (e.g., Afro-American, Puerto Rican, Chinese, Mexican-American). Neither the sequence of material nor the material itself is prescriptive: rather it provides springboards for inquiry into (1) causes of migration; (2) factors influencing migration to certain areas; (3) problems of adjustment; (4) cultural impact of incoming groups; (5) current problems and prospects.

Taking his lead from the students, a teacher may want to study the migration experiences of one of the ethnic groups in his class, or those

experiences in conjunction with another group. Our field activity has indicated it is not productive to recommend a rigid sequence of topics. The teacher is expected to shift sequences on the basis of students' interest, needs and abilities, and his own time allotment.

Reorientation to Teaching and Learning

Not only is new subject matter involved in the curriculum outlined above, but a reorientation to teaching and learning is called for in any implementation of LASER's School Curriculum. Despite the efforts of most teachers, too many students fail year after year. We ascribe this failure in considerable part to the persistence among teachers of a number of questionable assumptions:

The organization of content automatically develops thinking. How many social studies texts treat history by describing events strictly in chronological sequence? Such a sequence, selected by a textbook writer and passed on to the unquestioning teacher, is in turn passed on to passive students, who are assigned to memorize facts chiefly for the purpose of regurgitating them on a quiz or test. Any new organization of material that would stimulate both teacher and students to raise questions, to draw parallels, to seek causes, etc., would clearly be more productive in terms of developing thinking or cognitive skills.

Thinking can occur only after a substantial body of content has been acquired. Taba says: "This assumption has been primarily responsible for the overwhelming emphasis on 'coverage' of descriptive knowledge in social studies." Like the boa

constrictor, the child is expected to take in large portions of knowledge that he will "digest" later. The main aim of teaching is putting something into the child rather than getting something out. Piaget has demonstrated that thinking is developmental and occurs to the extent the child has an opportunity to form his own conceptual systems and to practice continually the transformation of experience into some organizing system. In the past the teacher tended to approach the child with predigested answers. She conducted lessons around putting these answers into the child's mind without sufficient regard for the child's developmental level or his experiences. Teaching itself is simply the mastering of a certain "fixed method." As one critic has observed, "This conception of teaching strategy is determined by the nature of the content area, outside or apart from the generic aspects of learning." Like the curriculum writers cited above, many teachers automatically approach teaching history with "a chronological method." In the case of American History, the beginning of the American experience is arbitrarily selected depending upon the orientation of the curriculum writer and the agreement of the teacher. The teacher proceeds with the chronicle of events without adequate regard for the child's sense of the distant past, appreciation of the cultures involved, a readiness to deal with certain kinds of conflicts, etc.

Teaching strategies should be sought that will enable the teacher to make each child the center of the learning

process. We maintain that each child can learn to think effectively at an early age. Tasks have to be devised that are appropriate to the child's own developmental level.

Our field experience with hundreds of teachers over the last four years suggests that the patient toil and time of teachers are all but wasted because they, wittingly or unwittingly, maintain one or more of these assumptions. Teacher preparation, we believe, should help the teacher (1) to be alert to the forces (within himself, the child and his environment) that will further a child's self-learning; (2) to build upon each child's acquisition of concepts, knowledge, and skills and reinforce them; (3) to provide profitable problem-solving situations; (4) to continue acquiring knowledge, understanding, skills that will enable students to interact positively with other students, students with teachers, teachers with teachers, parents with students.

II. THE LASER DESIGN

LASER (Learning and Action through Social Education and Reading) is a program for urban community-school leadership and curriculum development. It seeks to break down the walls between schools and the communities they are intended to serve. It consists of seven interrelated components:

- -Community-School Relations
- -Educational Leadership Development
- -In-School Activities
- -Joint Development and Evaluation
- -Parent Participation
- -Staff Development
- -Student Curriculum Development

Interrelationship of LASER Components

Ideally, all LASER components will feed into one another. For instance, in a given school district, the School Curriculum could be installed in a number of schools, drawing not only upon teachers and children of these schools but the parents as well, who may participate in the Parent Participation Workshop. From these very same schools principals would be eligible for Community-School Relations. The community members of Educational Leadership Development, by their examples of community involvement, could provide considerable impact on the children using the curriculum. Conversely, the children can make a contribution to the various components. What they come up with, for example, in their exploration of the community, can be of benefit to the participants engaged in their community pursuits.

> Program developers have an obligation to the materials and to the children for whom they are designed to maintain close collaborative contact with all persons involved in using the program: pupils, teachers, parents, community participants and school administrators. In this way it is possible to support and even

> influence the use and distribution of the material and to pinpoint effectively areas and procedures that may need modifications in order to meet local conditions. (Basic Program Plans - Center for Urban Education, 1971-75)

LSCC Objectives

Though the School Curriculum is an integral part of LASER, it can be used also as a single, separate design. Implementing LASER's School Curriculum requires an understanding of its philosophical foundation, a grasp of its conceptual framework, its objectives and teaching strategies. It also calls for a structured relationship between development/evaluation staff members and clients, a sharing of perspectives and aspirations, and it is hoped, a sense of commitment.

A primary responsibility for the developers will be to generate enthusiasm for the curriculum.

General Objectives are:

·To facilitate the utilization and evaluation of the LASER School Curriculum component in public schools.

·To develop specific, structured procedures, based on the inquiry approach, to enable site participants to interact in a way that will lead to efficiency and self-sufficiency in utilizing the curriculum.

·To reformulate goals and objectives in the light of new results.

Specific Objectives for Teachers are:

·To develop an understanding of the curriculum's philosophical foundation, objectives, and general teaching approach.

·To master the inquiry approach in (1) identifying (or defining) the problem; (2) hypothesizing; (3) testing the hypothesis; (4) drawing conclusions; (5) applying the conclusion; and (6) generalizing.

·To be aware of the purpose of each cognitive task.

·To create a classroom atmosphere that induces free exchange of ideas.

·To employ a variety of resources (in addition to or in place of those provided to achieve objectives of lessons).

·To incorporate ideas, suggestions or materials of others (colleagues, students, etc.) to advance work.

·To examine curriculum materials with an eye to preparing or adapting it to pupils and to plan or adapt instructional materials and methods around the entering behavior (not to be confused with achievement scores) of the students.

·To maintain a monitoring mechanism for keeping track of strengths and weaknesses of individual students.

·To engage students in the evaluative process, particularly of materials used, etc.

·To understand the lines of communication among the respective participants -- R & D agent, principal or assistant principal, teachers, paraprofessional, etc.

·To assess examples of different teaching styles (e.g., lecturer, discussion leader, or discussion facilitator) through actual or vicarious means (print, tapes, video-tapes, etc).

III. THE LASER SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Facts, important as they are, are included in the LASER School Curriculum essentially as a means to an end. The student is not required to "cover" a specific range of material. He is, however, expected to attain an understanding of human interaction and community institutions consistent with his general level of development.

Facts occupy a subordinate position to concepts in the LASER curriculum. Concepts selected for LASER are culture, social control, institutions, social organization, power, interdependence, change, urbanization, liberation, causality, and social conflict.

Conceptual Framework

It is important to draw a distinction between concept and generalization. Concept as used in the LASER School Curriculum is an abstraction derived from the social sciences and modified by the curriculum team. A generalization, on the other hand, is a statement of relationships among a number of conditions, events or even concepts and is also derived from the social sciences and adapted by the curriculum developers.

Some examples follow. (Note: Concepts are marked by one asterisk. Generalizations are marked by two asterisks.)

Change - Social/Cultural

* The existent social structure often resists modification and change by obstructing or impeding the movement toward change.

** In order to bring about the needed/desirable changes, one must have the resources (e.g. power) to (1) overcome the resistance of the social structure and (2) put the proposed programs and/or ideas into operation.

Culture

* Culture embraces the entire way of life shared by a group of people -- a body of organized thought, patterns of behavior, systems of values and beliefs.

** Some of the determinants of culture include class or caste, age, sex, ethnicity, tradition, and occupation.

** In most societies there is a principal culture, and a variety of other cultures. Interaction among these cultures may produce conflicts and/or exchange, which can result in social change.

** Aspects of culture may serve as a resource for group survival and for effecting social change, but they may also hinder social change.

Interdependence

* Men depend upon one another and on their environment for their existence.

** This interdependence can be supportive or conflict-producing -- that is, the environment can both complement and facilitate man's pursuit of his goals or can impede or obstruct his efforts.

** The opportunity to interact with various aspects of the environment is not the same for all men. This often results in varying degrees of frustration and in the formulation of different, sometimes conflicting, goals.

Unit Components

As already noted, the LASER School Curriculum consists of topics (see page 2), each of which is organized into a format called The Unit. A unit is defined as a body of information, procedures, questions, processes or suggested activities, arranged around a specific topic in a logically consistent sequence. As illustrated by the following diagram, each unit contains six components, and, depending on the nature of the Unit Topic, four to six modules (or more). A module is a subtopic of a unit.

THE UNIT

Unit Topic: _____

	Unit Components					
	The Unit Design	Readings	Teacher Resource Book	Student Action Book	Teacher Bibliographies	Multi-Media Instructional Materials
Module A						
Module B						
Module C						
Module D						
Module E						

A description of each of the six Unit Components follows:

1. The Unit Design

The Unit Design, which represents the most important component in the Unit, includes the following:

-Philosophy

-Statement of skills, knowledge, and attitudes

-Statement of organizational plan

-Teacher's copy of Student Readings

-Teaching procedures

-Listing of Suggested Student Activities

2. Readings

The Readings are a multi-ethnic, thematic series of stories related to the unit topics. These Readings have been developed around the same conceptual areas as the unit. They include carefully prepared student questions and exercises. In addition, other instructional aids like games, puzzles, evaluative questions and tallies enable both students and teacher to map their own progress. Each Reading contains a teacher resource guide.

3. Teacher Resource Book

For every Unit Topic there will be a Teacher Resource Book, which is specifically designed for that unit and which will contain at least the following information:

-Selected reference materials related to teaching strategies.

-Selected historical, factual, interpretive, and analytical reference material related to the unit topic.

4. Parent Guide Book

(The exclusion of the Parent Guide Book from the Unit Design is not intentional. The need for this component became clearer after the original Design was created. Its addition at this point indicates the developmental aspect of the program.) The parent will plan a vital part in the program. The Parent Guide Book is specifically designed to enable the parent to participate in the program. It will include:

-Copies of the content material.

-Suggestions for ways parents can help implement the program.

-Devices to enable parents to make input into the shaping of the program.

5. Student Action Book

The Student Action Books will contain the following:

-Recommended activities that will provide the opportunity for the student to reinforce his developing social concepts and social action skills.

-Selected readings which will: (1) illustrate the concepts inherent in each unit; (2) enable the student to identify these concepts; (3) enable the student to analyze the operation of these concepts in a variety of settings.

-Provision for an ongoing record, in the form of a log, of the student's individual inquiries, decisions, and actions.

-Provision for activity sheets which suggest alternative modes of action and which may be modified for best applicability to local conditions.

-A student bibliography of selected materials related to the unit topics and geared to the student's interest.

6. Teacher Bibliographies

The Teacher Bibliographies will list the titles of selected writings that relate to the several unit topics and a brief critical essay for each listing.

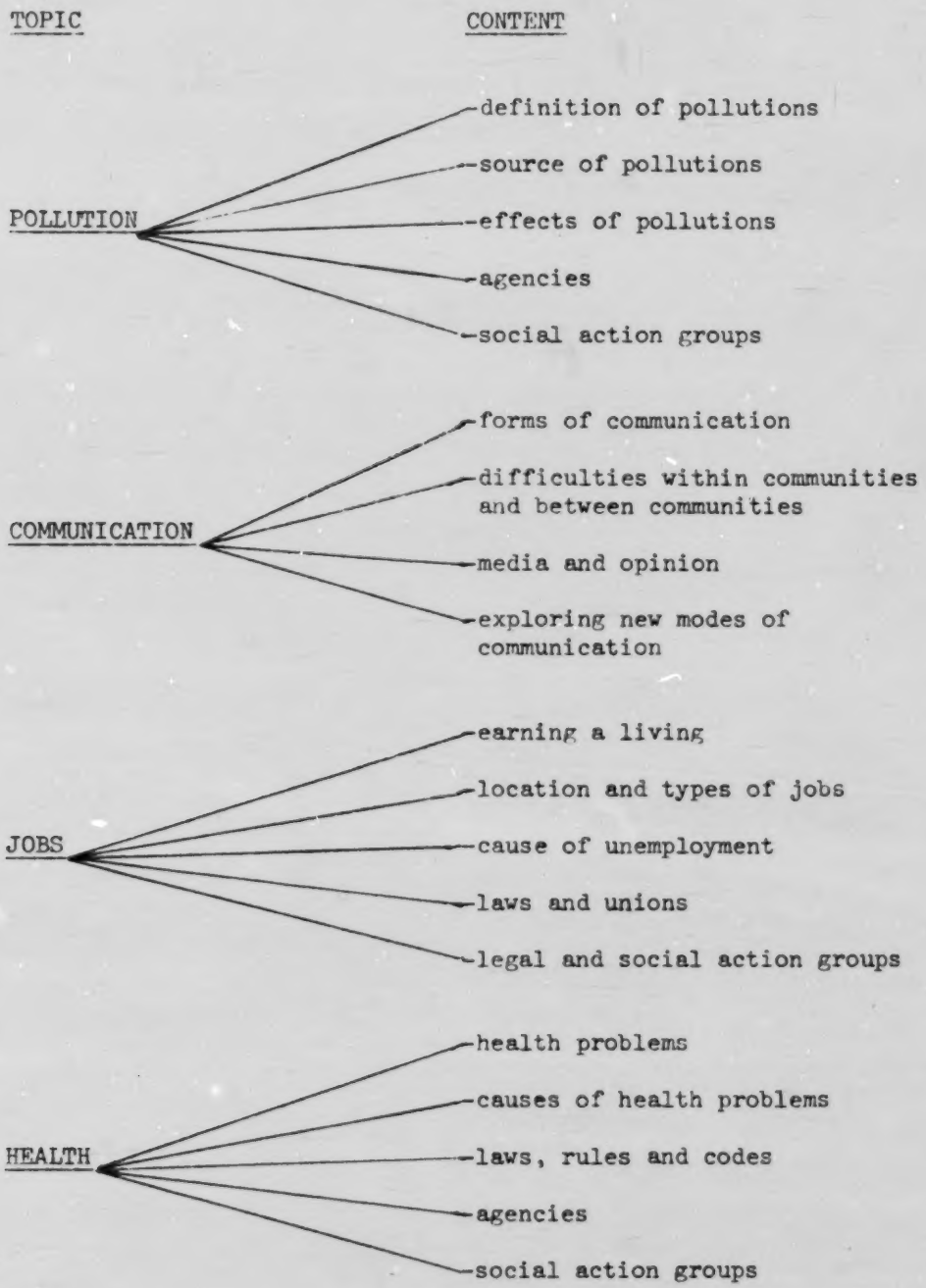
7. Multi-Media Instructional Materials

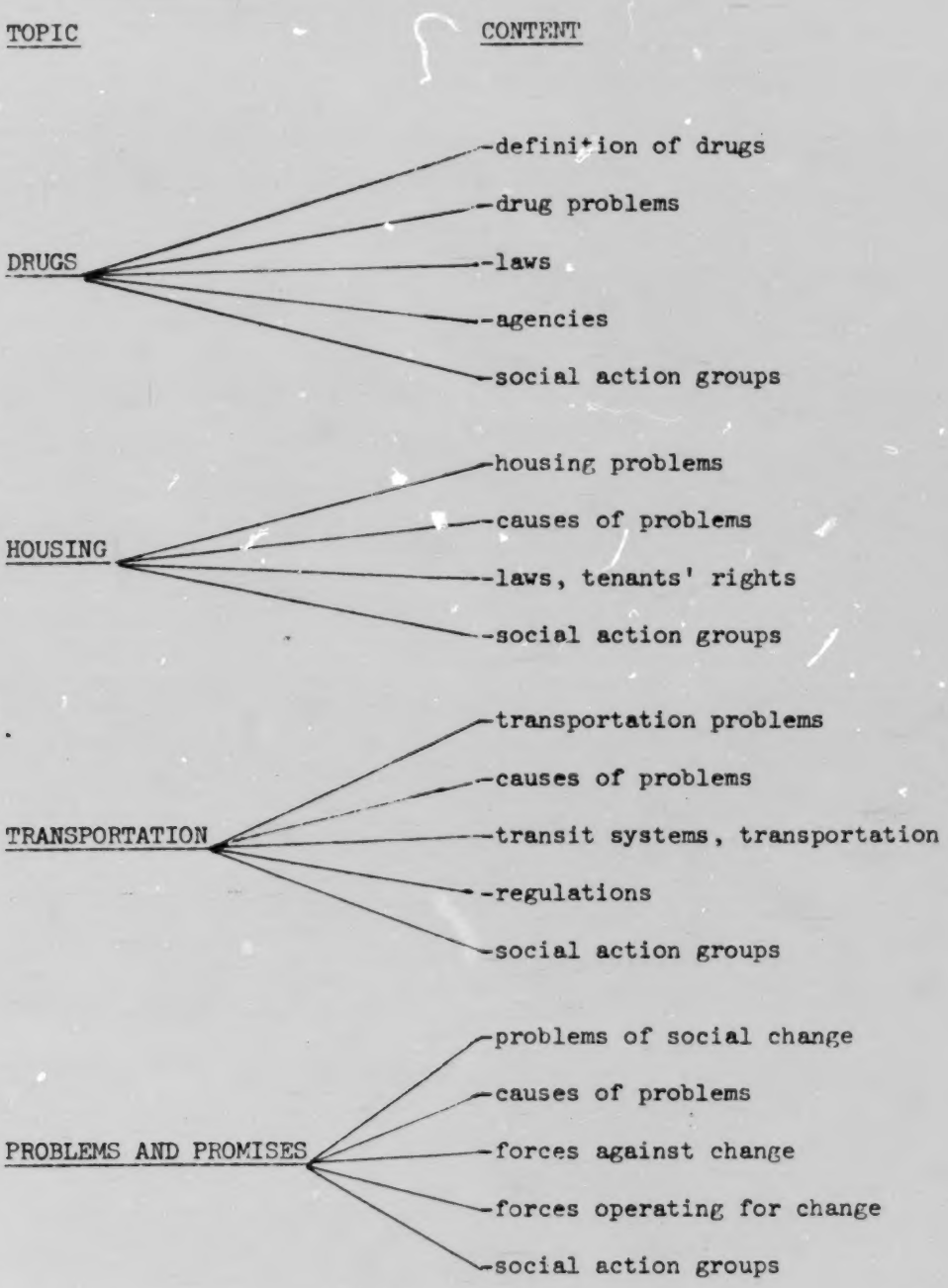
Multi-Media Instructional Materials will be developed in order to make available for teachers additional resources which they may use to increase the effectiveness of their inquiry teaching. They will include: films, filmstrips, recordings, transparencies, photographs, posters, and student desk materials (rexograph masters), printed material, graphs, statistical tables, and maps.

Outline of Unit Topics

The following is a list of topic areas and broad content outlines. Since the LASER approach is open-ended, the content outlines, of course, are at best general. The teacher will want to modify the content area so as to meet the specific needs and abilities of his or her students.

TOPIC	CONTENT
MIGRATION	-cause of migration -factors influencing migration -settlement in particular areas -problems of adjustment -cultural impact of incoming groups -present problems and prospects
LAW AND JUSTICE	-cause of urban crime -effects of crime -laws -law agencies -social action groups
CONSUMER EDUCATION	-the consumer -problems of the consumer -laws -agencies -social action groups


TOPIC
CONTENT
POLLUTION
definition of pollutions
source of pollutions
effects of pollutions
agencies
social action groups
COMMUNICATION
forms of communication
difficulties within communities and between communities
media and opinion
exploring new modes of communication
JOBS
earning a living
location and types of jobs
cause of unemployment
laws and unions
legal and social action groups
HEALTH
health problems
causes of health problems
laws, rules and codes
agencies
social action groups


TOPIC
CONTENT
DRUGS
-definition of drugs
-drug problems
-laws
-agencies
-social action groups
HOUSING
-housing problems
-causes of problems
-laws, tenants' rights
-social action groups
TRANSPORTATION
-transportation problems
-causes of problems
-transit systems, transportation
-regulations
-social action groups
PROBLEMS AND PROMISES
-problems of social change
-causes of problems
-forces against change
-forces operating for change
-social action groups

Teaching Strategies

The LSCC view of the student is that he is a dynamic organism, reflecting a particular culture, as opposed to his being a passive recipient with few assets. Such a view necessitates that certain requirements for the learning situation be fulfulled.

As Bruner has noted:

> The teacher is not only a communicator but a model. Somebody who does not see anything beautiful or powerful about mathematics is not likely to ignite others with a sense of the intrinsic excitement of the subject. A teacher who will not or cannot give play to his own intuitiveness is not likely to be effective in encouraging intuition in his students. To be so insecure that he dares not be caught in a mistake does not make a teacher a likely model of daring. If the teacher will not risk a shaky hypothesis, why should the student?

Teacher's Role

To be effective the teacher therefore should

-Be stimulating;

-Be daring;

-Be skillful in the use of the inquiry approach;

-Be familiar with a wide range of reading skills;

-Be resourceful, and not dependent upon any single piece of instructional material;

-Be appreciative of and sensitive to the child's individuality, behavioral level, ethnicity and environment;

-Be a facilitator of the learning process, rather than the conventional purveyor of knowledge.

Classroom Climate

In assuming the foregoing role, the teacher is well on his way to generating a classroom climate that is conducive to the child's cognitive development.

Such a teacher will be concerned about the learning environment. This teacher knows the importance of placing the child at the center of that environment. The child must be made to feel comfortable in the classroom, feel free to express himself both to the teacher and his classmates. His teacher's willingness to take risks and confess ignorance should relax him, so that his responses can be free and spontaneous.

Our field experience indicates that elementary school children tend to be less skilled in the discussion-type format than the junior high or high school students. Young children tend to be more active and subjective, but they have demonstrated that they benefit from this format.

To establish the classroom climate conducive to the inquiry approach, the teacher should observe the following guidelines:

Listen respectfully to each child's comment or question. What the child has to say is important. It is often through his speech that the teacher can understand or gain insights into the child's thinking, difficulties, etc.

Treat all questions and answers with equal importance. Teachers tend to express disapproval by ignoring or minimizing student questions. This can be discouraging to the child. Equanimity in response to questions, though difficult, is imperative.

Provide ample latitude for student answers. Children will quickly clam up in a class where the teacher has one answer in mind for a given question. The teacher can encourage responses by saying (instead of "That's wrong!"), "That's a possibility," or "Could you tell us more," etc. Also, the teacher should recapitulate different responses, grouping them as others are called upon.

Encourage children to accept the trial and error aspect of inquiry. Children can easily become discouraged when they make a mistake. It becomes a matter of great importance to bolster them under such circumstance, pointing out that they have not failed.

Encourage children to give rein to their imagination. The teacher should not become so bound to a series of problem-solving steps as to inhibit the imaginative flights of the students.

Check planned classroom tasks against criteria of student relevance or interest. The teacher should ask himself how will his planned task assist the child. Is the example stimulating enough? How does he know?

The Inquiry Approach

The child needs practice in transforming his experiences into some organizing system. The inquiry approach provides a means for doing this. Inquiry means "participating in the exploration and/or solving of problems that are real to the child."

We do not claim that there is one scientific method that can be applied to all problems. We do maintain that there is an inquiry or reflective posture that characterizes scientific investigation and, if assumed, will not necessarily solve many of out problems but will provide us with a basic requirement in scientific inquiry.

As in most scientific investigations, LASER School Curriculum inquiry is initiated in response to a recognized problem.

Thorndike has observed that "problems are of all levels of complexity, scope, and subtlety...but they all have in common three elements: 1) The individual is oriented toward a particular objective and motivated to reach it. He has an end in view; 2) Progress toward that end is blocked; 3) Available, habitual response patterns are not adequate to permit the individual to surmount the obstacle and proceed toward the objective."

In a workshop session described below, for example, we suggest that teachers launch the LASER School Curriculum by announcing that the new curriculum requires the students to study in a workshop setting. The teacher asks: "Is there anything you would do to make the classroom look like a workshop? (The teacher is to elicit from the students workshop models or, in case they are pressed for answers, describe one

to them.) If the classroom already resembles a workshop, to persue the matter in the inquiry mode, the teacher could ask: "How can we make it our workshop?" The exact working of the question or questions is not important. What is important is creating the healthy tension of a problem, recognizing possible obstacles and means of overcoming them, etc. The "if-then" or hypothesizing stage comes into play. "If we do this, that, and the other, then, the room will become a workshop." The group proceeds to the next stage to test their hypothesis. For example, if the group is going to be studying their neighborhood including the school itself, does it have the necessary data like maps, literature, reports, etc.? On the basis of their observations and "data generating" students will be in a position to proceed to the next stage of their inquiry -- drawing conclusions. Finally, they should be able to "apply their conclusions to other situations."

The focus in this inquiry approach is upon the skills of the search (identifying the problem, hypothesizing or developing tentative answers, testing the hypothesis, drawing conclusions, and applying the conclusions) as well as the answers.

Some problems, of course, will lend themselves to the foregoing sequence: others will not. The teacher should be prepared to recognize the distinction. In the best situation, only some children will grasp all the steps. Such discrepancies are to be expected and planned for in children's learning.

IV. ASPECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Administrative Structure. Past experience in installing instructional models in public schools has convinced us that before we can begin to prepare teachers to utilize the materials a number of preliminary steps must be taken. For example, school boards and community leaders should be approached and an amicable relationship established. A list of questions to assist staff with these preliminary steps is found in Appendix A.

The answers to these questions, in effect, will provide a profile of the target school community. Such a profile, fleshed with the specific facts about that school, will be a useful resource that will facilitate operations between the sponsoring agent and the target school.

Since instructional models do not develop in a vacuum, but are structures within larger structures, the success of one depends on the other. Authoritarian school administrations are known to affect adversely not only instructional models but interpersonal relations among staff members as well. During the pre-installation phase or orientation of LASER's School Curriculum, workshop discussion should be generated around the "ground rules" that will inform the teacher's action vis-a-vis the administration of his school.

Classroom Organization. A large number of public school classrooms are typically organized in formal fashion, with a number of desks in a single file facing the chalkboard. The teacher's desk and usual teaching position are at the front of the room. The interaction suggested by this arrangement is teacher-child or teacher-child/group rather than the teacher-child/teacher-group/child-child/child-group. Teachers may want to find out "how-far" they are permitted to go in experimenting with arrangements conducive to maximum interaction.

School Organization/Instructional Level. The teacher needs to understand the goals and objectives of the instructional model in a way that will enable him to work comfortably within the organizational framework of the administrative structure.

While the present LASER School Curriculum units are currently being utilized in grades 4 and 5, the emphasis of the curriculum is not on administrative expectation of achievement level. The emphasis is on the child's intellectual level, helping him at the point of his entry behavior to his highest point of cognitive development. If a particular piece of the content proves difficult for a child to read, the fault is less with the content than with the teacher. The content should provide as plentiful and varied a supply of materials as possible, to match the reading ability of each child. Flexibility and imaginative utilization of resources, therefore, are imperative. Some suggestions regarding adapting materials to needs will be discussed under the workshop topics.

Community. Just as the teacher should be informed about the administrative structure, he should be equally informed about the community in which the school is situated. The community possesses a wealth of resources that can serve the teacher in enriching the learning activity. Public and private agencies engaged in community activity and/or services are often very cooperative in sharing literature pertinent to classroom topics. Teacher preparation should include an inventory or survey of not only local resources, but others found in the greater community, town, or city.

Familiarity with the Parent Participation component of LASER indicates one way we invision parents contributing to the child's learning experience. It is important for the teacher to be informed of any parent organization

that interacts with the school, how that organization is organized, its goals and activity. Parents' attitudes toward new programs can affect the success or lack of success of these programs. Their knowledge in certain areas (e.g., if they are bi-lingual) can contribute directly to advancing the child's development in class.

V. LSCC SESSIONS

The Laser School Curriculum emphasizes thinking or cognitive operations. In schools where teachers have become accustomed to the time-honored role of purveyor of knowledge, it will become necessary to find ways of reorienting them to those skills and strategies that will enable them to help children achieve higher levels of cognitive operations.

The outlines that follow list some suggestions for reorientation activities for teachers.

OUTLINE I

PHASE	SESSIONS	TOPICS
(Phase 1) I	6	Orientation:
		-Introducing School Curriculum materials
		-Teaching strategies: Inquiry mode
		-Evaluation: Forms, Schedule and Personnel
		-Establishing lines of communication between school, CLC, and R and D agent
II		Teaching Strategies:
		-Teacher's Role
		-Classroom climate
		-Inquiry mode: Sequence and consequences
III		Providing Opportunity for Inquiry:
		-Real and/or Vicarious experiences
(Phase 2) IV		Developing inquiry techniques:
		-Creating inquiry setting
		-Questioning techniques
V		Community Resources:
		-History (recorded and oral)
		-Residents, agencies
VI		Teaching Techniques:
		-Demonstration Lessons
(Phase 3) VII	2 or 3	Evaluation

OUTLINE II

Topic: Orientation

Preferred Setting: Community Learning Center

Participants:
LSCC Task Force and consultant(s). School personnel: principal, teachers, PPW and other parents, paraprofessionals, clerks.

Objectives:
Explain the School Curriculum Program, including its goals and instructional objectives, materials, teaching strategies and evaluation.

Materials:
LASER flip chart.
School Curriculum material and LSCC forms (e.g.,initial modules: Discovery Module, Puerto Rican, Afro-American, and Chinese).
Readers.
"School Curriculum Outline"
Notebooks and personalized folders.
Tape Recorder.

Outcome:
An understanding of the program's goals, instructional objectives, content organization, teaching strategies, lines of communication, and implementation responsibilities.

Procedures:
-Arrange seating in a way that represents a workshop setting, preferably circular.

-Introduce Task Force. Introduce School representatives.

-Describe the workshop setting.

-State school curriculum goals and instructional objectives, rationale.

-Describe curricular components, readers, modules.

-Indicate the teaching strategies.

-Describe Evaluation - forms, schedule.

-Establish lines of communication between CUE and school or schools; between CLC and school or schools.

-Who is responsible for what?

NOTE: The responsibilities listed below are offered as one model; their implementation is contingent upon agreement among all participants.

Principal's Responsibilities:

1. To have a basic understanding of the philosophy, concepts, techniques, and knowledge of the curriculum.

2. To support the assistant principal and teachers in curriculum implementation.

3. To assist and support the teachers in school-community relationships.

Principal, Assistant Principal, or Designee's Responsibilities:

1. Act as a liaison between the school and the Center in curriculum implementation.

(cont.)

2. Conduct monthly planning meetings with the School Curriculum teachers to discuss each unit in order to:

   -understand aims and procedures of lessons as outlined in the Teachers Manual;

   -inventory lesson materials on hand, especially AV equipment (in absence of certain equipment consider alternate possible equipment or materials);

   -coordinate library service with lesson, i.e., arrange for available books related to unit topic to be set aside for program students;

   -assist in preparing classes for field trips;

   -help teachers relate seminar topics to lessons;

   -prepare for R&D staff visitation;

   -suggest ways to stimulate greater class participation.

Teacher's Responsibilities:

Note: See "Specific Objectives" above in addition to the major responsibilities below.

-To implement the curriculum in the classroom by utilizing resources available to him and, in the absence of resources, seek other resources.

-To assess to what extent component objectives are being met, including reaction of students (interest, participation), reaction to materials and workshop, how parent activity book relates to classroom work.

-To participate in LSCC workshop activity: 1) attend scheduled workshops; 2) exchange ideas with other participants; 3) report progress, problems and needs; 4) suggest ways in which parents can help support classroom activity through work at home.

Parents' Responsibilities:

-To assess to what extent component objectives are being met by: 1) reporting their reactions to the curriculum; 2) describing (to CUE representatives, teachers and other participants) their children's reaction to (and perception of) curriculum; 3) suggesting ways of improving the material in design or utilization; 4) communicating about the component with other parents; 5) evaluating workshop.

CUE's Responsibilities:

-To coordinate implementation and staff development by

1. conducting orientation workshops;
2. explaining philosophy and objectives;
3. supplying materials and other resources;
4. providing lesson demonstrations;
5. observing utilization of materials and procedures;
6. collaborating with Evaluation Division on establishing an evaluative process, on collecting analyses, reactions and results;
7. modifying and revising materials based on classroom observation, feedback, discussion and suggestions of all participants.

OUTLINE II-A

TOPIC: ORIENTATION

PREFERRED SETTING:
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

Participants:
LSCC Task Force and consultants.
School personnel: principal, teachers, PPW and other parents, paraprofessionals, clerks.

Objectives:
Assess teaching style that contrasts with the proposed style of LSCC component.

Material:
Film: "The Best of the Real: Teaching in the Inner City Elementary School." In three parts. (See description below.)

Outcome:
Differentiation between two styles of teaching - one teacher-centered, the other child-centered.

Description of Film:
"The Best of the Real: Teaching in the Inner City Elementary School" documents the classroom work of one fifth grade teacher in the southeast section of the Bronx in New York City and records evaluations of his work by a panel of educators. The film shows him teaching an elementary algebra lesson. (28 minutes; sound, 16mm.)

Procedures:
-Tell the group that they are going to view a film, alerting them to keep in mind the teaching style proposed for the School Curriculum component.

-Show film.

-Ask group to compare their views with those of film commentators.

-Compare/contrast.

Followup:
-Transcriptions of other teaching styles.

OUTLINE III

TOPIC: TEACHING STRATEGIES
PART I: TEACHER'S ROLE

PREFERRED SETTING: CLC
ALTERNATE SETTING: SCHOOLS

Participants:
LSCC Task Force and consultants.
School personnel: principal, teachers, PPW and other parents.

Objectives:
Explain teacher's role.

Materials:
Illustrations of various "informal classroom" settings.
Modules I and II.

Outcome:
An understanding of the teacher's role in LASER School Curriculum.

Procedures:
-Generate an open-ended discussion by asking the group: "On the basis of reading the instructional material, how do you envision your (teacher's) role in this program?"

-Encourage the group to examine the view of the teacher as one who initiates and facilitates the inquiry process. The teacher will provide the starting point for experiences, stirring students to read, discuss, debate, plan.

OUTLINE IV

TOPIC: INQUIRY MODE

PREFERRED SETTING: CLC
ALTERNATE SETTING: SCHOOLS

Participants:
LSCC Task Force.
School personnel: principal, teachers, PPW and other parents.

Objectives:
Outline an inquiry mode for utilization in the classroom.

Materials:
An outline of an inquiry mode.

Outcome:
Knowledge of an inquiry mode.

Procedures:

-Ask the group what it would include in an inquiry mode. Record key responses on blackboard. Essential to this activity is flexibility; discussions should include ideas and concerns of all workshop participants.

-Consider the following "problem" as an example of the inquiry mode: "What would you do if this happened to you? After having your lunch one day, you and some classmates go to (insert the location of the nearest playground.) At that same time a group of high school boys are playing baseball there. As you and your friends climb onto the swings, a baseball heads in your direction. A big boy comes running fast, almost running into the swings. He can't get the ball, for the swings going back and forth. Angry, he shouts at you and the others: 'Get outa here! Get outa here! ' And you leap from the swings and start running. You run and run until you're back in the school building."

-Proceed to elicit from the children their responses, asking "What do you think you would do about that situation? Is it a problem? What sort of problem? Isolated? Daily?"

-It is not important to structure your questions in keeping with a particular sequence. It is important to ascertain how the child approaches the "problem" and to note his approaches. The teacher will try to develop the child's intuitive approach to inquiry or problem-solving by increasing his awareness of what it is he is doing when he approaches a problem.

-Sustained questioning around identifying a problem, and its dimension, will increase the child's awareness of systematic approach to inquiry.

OUTLINE V

TOPIC: CLASSROOM CLIMATE

PREFERRED SETTING: CLC
ALTERNATE SETTING: SCHOOLS

Participants:
LSCC Task Force.
School personnel: principal, teachers, PPW and other parents

Objective:
Definition of desirable classroom climate.

Materials:
Illustration of various "informal classroom" settings.

Outcome:
An understanding of different ways to create a desirable classroom climate.

Procedures:

NOTE: This topic may very well arise as an integral part of the discussion of teacher's role since classroom climate is inextricably tied up with the way the teacher handles his role. In the event, however, that the topic is not discussed in some depth, the following suggestions may be helpful.

-Elicit from the group possible ways of creating a classroom climate that will enable the child to feel comfortable in pursuing his goals, asking questions and sharing information and ideas with his peers.

-If necessary, suggest the following:

1) De-emphasising the traditional physical setting with the teacher and his desk at the front of the room and the students seated before him in rows.

2) Studying the "open door" model classroom with the classroom chairs and other equipment forming distinct learning areas: social studies, language arts, math, and with the room reflecting the child's immediate environment, the ethnic identification of the residents, their various jobs inside as well as outside the neighborhood.

3) Encouraging students to think of the classroom as their "workshop", by designating space for them to express themselves in various activities.

-Elicit ways teachers can encourage classroom dialogue. Understanding what the child is saying may require, in some cases, a rather long line of respectful questioning. As long as the child feels what he says has value, as long as he can feel free to speak <u>without</u> being judged or censured, the more likely he is to "open up."

OUTLINE VI

TOPIC: MODULE TRANSITION PREFERRED SETTING: CLASSROOM

Participants:
LSCC Task Force.
School personnel: principal, teachers, PPW and other parents.

Objective:
Consider alternative approaches to connecting previously studied modules.

Materials:

Outcome:
Knowledge or skill in moving from one curricular activity to another.

Procedures:
-Elicit comments on material and problems with inquiry approach.

-Guide discussion on how teachers plan or envision moving from their present curricular activity to the next. For example, if the teacher began with the "Discovery Module", which serves as an introduction to the Migration Unit and has as its focusing idea: "People of diverse ethnic backgrounds live in our city," he may want to identify the ethnic groups represented in the class, community or city. This review could include tracing the different groups' migration paths on globes or atlases. If the teacher is going to proceed to the folktales, he can ask the pupils if they have ever heard folktales before. Cite, if necessary, one or two that are probably known to them. Tell the tale. Discuss briefly where such tales come from and the function they serve.

If the teacher is going to proceed to the ethnic modules, a review of the "Discovery Module" is also suggested.

SUMMING UP

After four years of working with experimental social education materials, the LSCC Task Force would suggest that the following basic requirements are called for:

- Knowledge and understanding of the goals, objectives, rationale, structures, concepts, and teaching strategies on the part of all personnel involved in curriculum development.

- A disposition to change: The principal must assume positive leadership in generating a congenial atmosphere; faculty, parents and others should be receptive to exploring the curriculum.

- A willingness to utilize an inquiry approach to problem-solving.

- Collaborative arrangements among innovators and target participants to include at least three phases, a pre-installation training or orientation, in-service workshops and post-installation evaluation and revision sessions.

- Effective lines of communication with the target school community.

- Flexibility in the utilization and evaluation of the curriculum so as to afford modification without sacrificing continuity. Devices for regenerative feedback should be provided.

- Active participation from all, especially those parties who hitherto have been excluded--parents, aides, and other community residents.

- Extension of school activity beyond the walls of the school building.

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APPENDIX A

VITAL STATISTICS ON COMMUNITY

-Who is district assistant superintendent? Has he been informed? If "yes," when?

-Who constitute the P.A. or P.T.A.? Has it been informed of the program?

-What are the geographical boundaries of the target community?

-Are there landmarks that would lend themselves to a learning project? If "yes," where?

-Are there published materials on the area (like "urban planning publications") that can be utilized in the program? If "yes," where?

-What are some of the private/public agencies serving the community?

-Would representatives of the agencies that relate to the program be available for speaking to teachers or students or both? At what fee?

-Are there land-scale maps available? If "yes," where? Cost of reproduction?

APPENDIX B

VITAL STATISTICS ON THE SCHOOL

Collect data regarding the target school or schools.

-What is the name/number of the school district? Its boundaries?

-How many elementary schools are in the district? What are their grade ranges? Ethnic composition?

-How many junior high schools are in the district? Their grade range? Ethnic composition?

-What is the school year calendar? How many school days are scheduled? Holidays?

-What is the subject schedule (or class program) for each school? How much time is generally allowed for social studies? Reading?

-How much time can be allotted for teaching the LASER curriculum?

-How much prep time is available for preteaching planning?

-Are some days better than others for visitors to come to experimental classes and observe lessons? When?

-Who will be the school's coordinator or liaison representative for the experimental curriculum?

-What is his or her schedule?

-What is the best time to hold periodic conferences with the participating teachers, parents, etc?

-Ascertain acceptable amount for workshop stipends for participants (parents, teachers, etc.).

APPENDIX C

VITAL STATISTICS ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

-Who are the participants? LASER pupils' parents?* Other community residents?

-What are their experiences in (educational) community involvement? Would they be available for in-service workshops or conferences? If "yes," when? Would they be available for participation in classroom activity (e.g., speaking to a class or combined classes about their, say, "migration" experiences)?

-Why did they leave their native homes to come to the city; what problems confronted them in the city?

-Have they previewed the curriculum content? If "yes," what were their reactions?

*The Parent Participation Component collects vital statistics on its participants that could be utilized here.

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

NAME _____

LICENSE _____

NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING _____

NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING PRESENT GRADE _____

SCHOOL _____

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

DEGREES	MAJOR
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

CLASS DATA

CLASS _____ ROOM NUMBER _____

NUMBER OF STUDENTS _____

ETHNIC COMPOSITION - BY OBSERVATION ONLY

CHINESE _____

SPANISH-SPEAKING _____

AFRO-AMERICAN _____

OTHERS _____

SPECIAL PROGRAMS THIS SEMESTER:

_____

_____

_____

PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

EXCELLENT ☐ SATISFACTORY ☐ UNSATISFACTORY ☐